

ON WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU?

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the
Lord's side? Let him come unto me."
Exodus 32:26.*

DURING the last few days in which the stir of a general election has moved the quietest of our streets, every one of you must have been asked many times on which side you are. Some are enthusiastic on this side and some are quite as warm on the other, and the interest of all ranks and classes is awakened. Now that the Lord's-day has come I hope you will forget all about politics and listen to me while I ask a far more important question, namely, *"Who is on the Lord's side?"* May God grant us grace to give an honest answer and may that answer be, "Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." May thousands of you say to the Lord what Amasai and his band said to David, "Yours are we, David, and on your side, son of Jesse."

Before I enlarge upon this exceedingly personal and practical question, I must ask you to remember the man who asked it. It was Moses who put this question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and he put it to Israel when sin was rampant in the camp. It is well to remember that he stood there as a lone man, the solitary champion of Jehovah and challenged the whole nation to decide for God. His own brother had practically deserted him and become the means of making the golden calf. The seventy elders who ought to have been by his side were none of them present with him. Except his lieutenant Joshua, he stood alone in the midst of the multitude just when they were intoxicated with their lustful pleasures and their fanatical worship. He was equal to the emergency. Thoughtless altogether of his own safety, dauntless, brave, and bold, he dashes down their idol and commands it to be ground small and cast into the water of which the nation would drink. He upbraids them to their faces and strides among them, as much superior to them all as a shepherd is superior to the flock he tends. You have to admire his courage. You wonder at his supreme power and you inquire for the secret of such sovereign strength. Moses must have worn about him a dignity most commanding, a royalty far superior to that which comes of birth or office. Know you not where he derived that majesty? He had been for forty days alone with God. Heavenly communion makes a man strong. He had been in the secret place of the Most High. He had spoken with God face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, and it was not likely that he should fear the face of man after having seen the face of God. He had been familiar with the sublime and when he came down to the infinite littleness of men, who had dared to liken the glory of God to the image of an ox that eats grass, he wore about him a natural superiority before which they all trembled and slunk away in fear.

Moses was also a man of prayer. He had stayed the hand of the Almighty on the mountain's brow till even God Himself had said, "Let Me alone"—wondrous though it may seem, the man Moses, by his holy faith, had even put a restraint on God Himself. Be you sure of this, that the man who has power with God will have power with men. If we have power with God for men, we shall have power with men for God. He that can overcome heaven by prayer, what is there that he cannot conquer?

There stood Moses, like a lone rock in the midst of the tempestuous sea. The tumult of the people raged around him, but he was firm and unmoved. He became indeed the one fixed point upon which the very existence of true religion depended. All the partisans of godliness remaining in the camp, hidden and concealed, rallied to his call and the one man saved the cause. So has it been in history, not once nor twice, but many a time. A single determined man, full of God's Spirit, has confronted the whole mass of the people, has breasted the rushing torrent of popular prejudice, and has not only stemmed the current, but turned it in the opposite direction even as Moses did. Being girt with the power of God and having learned to dwell on high, the one believer has become the heroic leader of a band of earnest hearts. Brethren and sisters, we want in these days men and women of fixed principles. We need individuals of

enlightened mind and determined will. Those who know what is right and will not deviate from it, even though they should hazard their lives, are greatly required. We want to have, not one or two, but multitudes of steadfast men, who, when they put their foot down, mean to abide there and cannot be pushed from off their standing-place. If any of you aspire to lead your own families and to influence your own connections in the right way, you must possess personal strength of mind of the right sort and you must get it where Moses gained his power. You must be much alone with God and mighty on your knees. Come forth to face the wicked world with your faces radiant with the light of God. Communion with heaven must win for you divine help, that you may not be overcome by evil, but may overcome evil with good.

Thus much concerning Moses. God make us to be like him. Let us now consider Moses' question and command, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." I think I see here three very important points. The first is *decision*—a man must be on the Lord's side. Secondly, here is *avowal*, "Let him come unto me"—if he is on the Lord's side, do not let him skulk away in his tent, but let him confront the adversary. And thirdly, here is *consecration*, for those on the Lord's side were to come to Moses that they might do the Lord's bidding and fight the Lord's battles at all hazards.

I. First then, here is DECISION, or being on the Lord's side. *It is a decision upon the most sublime and important theme* which can ever come under a man's notice. Here are the two camps, God and Satan, truth and falsehood, holiness and sin. On which side are we ranged? When I see a man pausing as it were between the two hosts and saying to himself, "Which shall have my heart? Which shall command my service?" I feel that he tarries in a position at once hazardous and sublime, for whichever that choice shall be it means eternity—it means heaven and all its glories—or it means hell with all its terrors. Whether the man shall be for God or for His enemies will mean, for that man, kinship with angels or league with devils. It shall mean for him the white robe and the everlasting song of adoring praise or it shall mean the blackness of darkness and the perpetual wailing of unending misery. Hence a man is placed in a most solemn position when this question is put to him, "Are you on God's side or are you His enemy?" About all other matters, you should go to work with such a measure of consideration as they deserve, but to this business you must bring your weightiest thought. You must concentrate all your wit and wisdom, and judge and decide upon this matter with all calmness and deliberation, but with all solemnity of resolution and sternness of determination, so that having once made your choice by the directing grace of God you may stand to that choice world without end. Are there any here who have not decided upon this point? As the question goes round, "Who is on the Lord's side?" are some of you obliged to say, "I have not made up my mind yet"? It is time you did, for it is a dreadful thing for a man to be standing there, as I said, midway between God and the devil, between Christ and Belial, between heaven and hell, for, whether he knows it or not, that midway place which he thinks he occupies is really on the wrong side. So our Lord Jesus judges it, "He that is not with Me is against Me and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad."

This decision, dear friends, so important and weighty, *should be made as early as possible*. It is not a matter which we can afford to leave in the balances, hanging in suspense. Oh that young people would think of this and not waste the best part of their lives in halting between two opinions! When Agesilaus came to the borders of Macedon, he sent the terse message, "As friends or as enemies?" The answer was, "We must stop awhile and take advice." His reply was, "While you advise, we march." Happy is that young man who can say to others, "While you are considering, I have decided. While you are hesitating, I have pushed on and given my heart to God. While you are temporizing, I have already entered into conflict with sin and death and hell. While you are counting the cost, I have already reckoned the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." Happy is he who first crosses the Rubicon of decision, drawing his sword against sin and throwing away the scabbard, that he may never make a truce or treaty with the foe. It is a decision that should be made at once, O man, for death is near you and eternity begins to dawn. Wait not, young man. Wait not, young woman. Every hour renders it more likely that you will make a foolish choice. Delay is dangerous, for it is breeding in you the disease of trifling. Take heed lest you grow into a procrastinator and halt, and halt, and halt till you become such a cripple that you will halt through life and never march with the armies of the Lord. Oh that grace would lead each one to decide upon the spot!

This is a decision of the greatest importance, for *it will influence every subsequent decision throughout life*. If God's grace shall lead me to say, "Yes, write my name down in the roll of champions on the Lord's side," then from that day forth every other question will be read in the light of that decision. You will henceforth give your love to truth in rags and not to falsehood in silk apparel. Henceforth you will favor righteousness when she walks in the mire and abhor injustice when he rides in the high places of the earth. If you are on God's side, whatsoever things are pure, honest, and of good report will find a friend in you. You will never be on the side of drunkenness, nor on the side of oppression, injustice, or war, for in being on the side of God you are the advocate of sobriety, justice, and peace. The side of God is in the highest and best sense the side of mankind. We best promote the interests of nations when we advance the cause of God. I pray that our piety may be of such a practical kind that we may carry it with us into everything that we do. I like not that religion which lives in churches and is glorious on a Sunday, like the parish official in his fine coat, but falls back into its ordinary shabby wear when the service is done. Give me that godliness which finds itself at home at the fireside and is in its right place in the counting house and the work room. True religion is meant for field and street, for polling booth and the market. It gives a tincture to everything with which the man comes in contact and find him where you will, you see that he is on the Lord's side because he is on the right side. The follower of Jesus takes that side which for a season may be unpopular, but which is, according to the law and to the testimony, right in the sight of God. Take care, then, how you make your decision as to God, since on that pivot your whole character will turn.

As to this decision *there ought to be no possible difficulty*. A man should decide for God since He is his Creator. Dare you think of being opposed to Him that made you and who can crush you as easily as a moth? He is our Redeemer, the Lord that bought us with His blood. Is it possible that we can be on any other side than His? He is our daily Preserver, in whose hand our breath is and can we live in antagonism to Him? Our relation to our God ought to be an easy question to decide when we recollect our obligations. We are not only indebted to God for our being, but for every favor which we now enjoy or ever hope to possess. Should not a man be on the side of his friend, on the side of the best of friends? Think of our responsibilities as they arise out of all the blessings which God bestows and there should be an instant verdict of the heart for God and for His Christ. It should not be difficult to any right-minded man to say, "Yes, I am on the side of truth," and because God is truth, we should be on His side. Every right principle demands that we yield ourselves to God. His is the just side, the true side, the side which must ultimately conquer, the side deliberately adopted and earnestly upheld by all holy angels and perfected spirits. Should our decision need much considering?

Who wants time to debate when the way is plain? And yet *it is sadly true that, through our sinfulness, an honest, sincere, practical decision is not soon arrived at*. No, it will never be arrived at except the Holy Spirit shall influence our minds and deliver us from the thralldom of our sinful lusts. Oh, that the Spirit of God might lead us to choose God's side although it is not the side of self, but directly the opposite. The most of men are swayed by their own interests, "Which is the best side *for me*? Which will bring me the most wealth, or the most esteem, or the most quiet?" But he that is on the side of God scorns such base considerations and favors not that which is profitable for the present, but that which is just and right.

Alas, many are influenced by the fear of men. What a potent factor is this evil element in directing human affairs! Men would do right, but they dare not. They would avoid that which is wrong, but then they might be ridiculed for too great precision and therefore they indulge the side which their conscience condemns. My brethren and sisters, may the Lord give us a different mind from this. May the opinion of men have small weight with us. Let us not be afraid to make enemies rather than disobey God. I would have you of the same mind as the old Spartan who said the question with him never was, "How many are my enemies?" but, "Where are they?" Yes, that is it, "Where are they?" That is all. We are ready for them, and do not count the odds. If adversaries to truth and righteousness abound, never think of them. Do not calculate their strength, nor estimate what an attack upon them may cost you, but at once throw down the gage of battle and for God and for righteousness take the right side.

One other remark must be made—*this decision involves but one alternative*. If we are not on God's side, we are on the opposite side. All through the Word of God there is no preparation made for a third party. There is a very numerous body of people who try to inhabit the Betweenities. They will, if they

can, go on both sides or on neither side—they want to be left alone—they wish to keep themselves to themselves and say nothing and do nothing either way. Now, there is no preparation made for you, either in this world or in the next. There is no synagogue of the undecided on earth and no purgatory of middle men in the unseen world. As to this world, there is no comfort held out to you. You are not praised, but you are denounced by the Scriptures and even cursed most bitterly for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty. You are regarded as enemies to God until you are His friends and it must be so, for he that is not honest is dishonest. He that is not chaste is impure and he that is not for God is necessarily against Him. It is a matter about which a soul cannot be colorless, so far from this even being possible, this matter is one about which there is usually much intensity of feeling one way or another—for God has fervent friends and bitter foes. All great questions raise in men's minds strong movements one way or the other and this greatest of questions is sure to do so. Though at present, my friend, you feel no strong movement in the wrong direction, yet that which can produce a great evil movement is lurking in your spirit and if it is not slain, by the grace of God leading you to be on God's side, one of these days that slumbering sin of yours may awaken itself to an awful display of power. As when a viper, which before was numbed by the cold, is warmed into vitality, stings all who are near it, so does sin when its hour comes. As the lion cub which has not tasted blood is tame as a cat and yet by-and-by it assumes all the fury of the beast of prey, so is it with the demon of iniquity which hides within the human spirit. One way or another you must have God and His Christ or you must be the servants of Satan—holiness must hold you or sin will bind you—heaven must win you and attract you to itself or hell will mark you for its own and down you will descend. There, then, I leave the matter of decision, praying earnestly that all who have decided may stand to it and that those who have not decided may be led of the Spirit to make up their minds at once.

II. Secondly, let us consider the AVOWAL. "Who is on the Lord's side? *Let him come unto me.*" The Hebrew is sharper. It reads like this, "Who is on Jehovah's side? To me." It is like the cry of one who strikes the first blow in war and unfurling the standard, summons men to enlist. "For God—to me." "If you really are His servants, come and gather to me." In this avowal there is, first of all, *a coming out*. They were to come out from amongst the idolaters. You who are on the Lord's side, away in your tents, where you have gone that you might not join with the riotous crowd—come to me! You that are away there in the furthest limits of the camp, who have gone to be quiet from all this noise and uproar—come into the gate of the camp to me and show yourselves. None must hide their colors this day. Now then, I say this morning to you who are on God's side, do not conceal your religion. Be not wickedly reticent. Be not ungratefully retiring, but come forward. "Come you out from among them. Be you separate; touch not the unclean thing." There is too little separation from the world nowadays among Christian professors. I do not wonder at the question a little girl asked of her mother when she had been reading the New Testament, "Mother, don't you think it would be very nice if we could all move away and go and live where there are Christians?" Her mother said, "Why, there are many Christians around us." "Oh no, mother, not like those I have been reading of in the New Testament." I am afraid the child was right, though there are some New Testament Christians even here. I wish there were many more who in all things followed not the fashions of the world and the follies of the times, but walked with God in the separated path where Jesus' footsteps are seen.

This avowal, however, was not only a mere coming out only—they were to *come to the leader*. Moses stood there and said, "Let him come *unto me*." He stood there as God's representative and seemed to say, "I am on God's side; there is no question about that, though I stand alone—now let others who are on God's side come to me." "Ah!" you say this morning, "We wish we had a leader bold and brave to whom we could come." I reply, you have such a leader. Where is He? He is gone into the highest heavens, but your faith may see Him. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is first and foremost on God's side. He proved it by His life and proved it by His death and this morning He bids all that are on God's side to come to Him. Come and let Him be your Master and Lord. Come and imitate His example and keep His precepts. Come and proclaim His gospel and defend His kingdom. He that is on the Lord's side let him come to Christ and follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

And yet there is this much more about it. Those who were to come to Moses were of course to *come to one another*. When Moses said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me," He was virtually gathering a church and enlisting an army of men whose hearts God had touched. Such came forth at

Moses' call. Come, then, you that love the Lord, come and join with others who think as you do. Do not birds of a feather flock together? If God has made you birds of Paradise, hasten to fly like doves to your windows. Friend, if I am on the Lord's side and you are on the Lord's side, why should we be strangers to one another? There are few enough to stand up for Christ. Surely they ought to be knit together in closest affection. Unity is strength and as we have no strength to spare, let us be united. Come forth you that know the Lord and avow your allegiance by joining with others who love your King. Enlist under the same Captain and inscribe your names in the same muster roll.

I cannot give out this call with all the energy I would or I would publish it from every market. I beseech those who are not on the Lord's side not to attempt to unite with any visible church, for that would be rank hypocrisy. But I would encourage and invite and entreat and almost go the length of commanding those who are on the Lord's side to declare themselves. Come you to us, for we also are on the Lord's side. Lend us your help. Afford us your company. Let us enter into fellowship with one another and let us be banded together for everything that is good and true because we are on the Lord's side. Attend to this, I pray you and make an avowal of your decision for God as speedily as possible.

III. In the third place, with this avowal should come CONSECRATION. Those who are on the Lord's side should not merely give their names, but give themselves. When we are on the side of Christ we belong to Christ. Every man who really is on the Lord's side should feel that he is *bound to obey God's will*. I thank God that I learned this lesson when I first knew the Savior. I did not think that in matters of religion I was to follow my father or any other good man. It seemed to me that God had put into my hand the Bible and I was to read it—I was to find out with diligent searching whatever the Lord taught me in that book and I was to believe and to do as His Word taught me. I feel it now to be a great comfort to my heart that I took nothing at secondhand. I received my doctrine not of men, neither was I taught it, but I went directly to the wellhead and drank from the source itself, by the teaching of the Spirit of God. I want you all to do this. Do not follow a church—do not follow any great preacher—pin yourself to no man's sleeve. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them. If everybody would do this, there might still remain diversities of judgment, but I am inclined to think that unity in doctrine and in practice would be far sooner attained by this habit than by any other means. If each one would go to the Word for himself and no longer settle down in an "ism" learned from somebody else, we would know the truth and come together in our views of it. Following in a certain track because you happen to be put in it by the circumstances of your birth and education is not the way of a candid and enlightened mind. I care not for the decrees of churches or the dogmas of men. I honor both churches and holy men, but not as dictators to our faith. This one book, the Bible, contains the religion of the true Christian, so far as it can be described by letters and the Spirit of God has promised to enlighten us as to its meaning. God grant we may never say, "I do such-and-such because it is in the Prayer-Book," or "Because it is according to our denominational standards." What have you to do with any book but the Bible, or with any denomination but the church of Christ, unless it is that the book and the denomination are scriptural? See you well to this, for careful obedience to God is much needed in these times. I have referred to a Spartan once or twice this morning, for something of the Spartan spirit would do well if saturated with the spirit of Christ. A Spartan in the midst of battle was about to kill his foe. His sword was lifted up as the trumpet sounded a retreat and he drew back his weapon, and when one asked, "Why did you allow him to escape?" he replied, "I would sooner obey my general than kill an enemy." For a Christian there is nothing like obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken, than the fat of rams." Let us learn that.

When we come to be on the Lord's side we are not only to be willing to obey His will, but *we are to serve Him actively and energetically*. Moses said to these men, "Gird every man his sword upon his thigh." You are not to enlist on the Lord's side to idle away your time. Hosts of people think when they get into the bosom of the church that they are to sleep there like babies in their mothers' arms. The gospel coach goes by and they climb to a box seat if they can, and ride, but the idea of ever driving the coach—the idea of working for the Master—enters not into their heads. It must not be so with us. We must throw our activities and our energies into the side which is God's, even as the tribe of Levi fought valorously against the rebellious people.

And we must do this at all hazards and costs. These men had a very painful duty to perform. They were made executioners of their brethren, who were found guilty of high treason against God, their

King. It cost their hearts much to kill every man his brother or friend, but if they found them obdurate in their idolatry, they were commanded to slay them without mercy and they did so. Their hand did not spare, neither did their eye have pity upon any who persisted in rebellion. See what Moses said of them, "Of Levi he said, let your Thummim and your Urim be with your Holy One, whom you did prove at Massah and with whom you did strive at the waters of Meribah. Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Your Word and kept Your covenant." They were thorough with God and so must we be. When you join Christ's church there must be a cutting off of right arms and a plucking out of right eyes if necessary. There must be a mortifying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We are called to a battle and we must prepare for it and not be afraid.

Now, because these men were thus faithful to God, they were made the teachers of Israel ever afterwards. Let me continue to read to you what Moses says of them, in Deuteronomy 33:10, because they had impartially executed the sentence of the Lord. "They shall teach Jacob Your judgments and Israel Your law; they shall put incense before You and whole burnt sacrifice upon Your altar." Furthermore, they were to be preserved and made more than conquerors because of their stern faithfulness. They had smitten through the loins of God's enemies and now the prayer of the man of God breathes this blessing over them, "Bless, Lord, his substance and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." Levi smote God's enemies—God will smite his enemies. Those who mind God's work shall find that God works for them. They did their duty with stern integrity and therefore God makes them leaders of His people, teachers of His nation, and they shall henceforth themselves triumph over all their adversaries. I would have every man who is on the Lord's side and who has avowed it, follow the Lord's Word in all things, cost what it may. You will find in the Bible doctrines which the world will denounce as harsh—hold them and let them call you cruel if they please. You will have to publish stern doctrines which will smite the tall crest of human pride and thwart the pleasing inclinations of fleshly minds—publish them, nevertheless. God will justify you in so doing and vindicate you from all aspersions. Allow no reservations. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. If you are "a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb," it is yours to do what God bids you. Yours not to reason why, yours if necessary to dare and die and still in all holy meekness and gentleness to maintain truth, rough and rugged though it seem to the dainty philosophers of our day. Be ever on the side of right. May the Spirit of God help us in all this, for unless He helps us, I am sure we shall fail, but if He is with us, we shall conquer. Those of you who are as yet little in Israel should take care that you do well your work for God in your obscure places and then you shall be lifted to more prominent positions. These Levites were made teachers because they had dared at God's bidding to be executioners, a work associated in men's minds with dishonor. They were bold enough, though but a few, to confront the whole camp and now they shall be made wise enough to teach all the tribes. Use well the lowest position and do it honor. Agesilaus the Spartan, when they placed him in a back seat, took no umbrage at it, but said, "I will honor the seat if the seat does not honor me." So, if you are placed in the lowliest place in Christ's house, do honor to it and by-and-by, when the King comes in to see the guests, He will say, "Friend, come up higher." If you are faithful over a few things, He will make you ruler over many things, only take heed to it that you fully consecrate yourselves to Him on whose side you are.

I wish in conclusion to show the suitability of my subject to this present time. I am sure it is not out of season. "Who is on the Lord's side?" let him come to Christ and consecrate himself this day to Him. For first, *the worship of the golden calf is pretty general now*. Men are esteemed according to the amount of money which they possess. Indeed, we say a man is "worth so much." Though the man may not be worth a pair of old shoes, yet if he has a big house, a fair estate, and a huge capital, he is said to be worth so much. Poor little creature! In many cases his worth might be written on your thumbnail. It is not the man that has worth—his house, his lands, and his gold have the worth, but not the man. There is far too much bowing down and cringing before the golden calf in all classes of society. No end of dodges are tried to get a scraping of one of the creature's hoofs. Brother, you must sooner endure poverty than do a wrong thing for the sake of riches and you must learn to value men for what they are, not for what they have. It needs not Christianity to tell you that some of the worthiest, noblest, and most kingly of men earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. When you meet them, love and honor them. On the

other hand, you must know that some of the vilest of men have at times climbed to high places of wealth and power. Do not cringe to any man, but least of all bow to a mere moneybag. Value men by their characters and not by their positions. God grant that none of us may ever be found worshipping the golden calf. Yet to get into society the basest things are done. I do not know what sort of thing society may be, but I have heard that it is a very wonderful achievement to get into society—to have the privilege of enjoying the empty ceremonies and hollow shams of stupid splendor! To have the privilege of talking to those persons who spend more on their dress than on their religion. From what little I do know of this wonderful thing called “society,” I have felt no ambition to partake in its felicities. And yet to get into society I have seen men fling away their principles, forsake their friends, stifle their consciences, abandon their church fellowship, and become traitors to their God. Indeed, they are successful in business and hope to rank among the county families and so they leave those who love them to entertain at lavish cost those who sneer at them. The Lord save those of you who are prosperous from being thus degraded.

The next thing you need to be firm and strong about is *the superstitions which are too often associated with religious worship*. Remember, God is to be worshipped and God only. That is the essence of the first commandment, but God is to be worshipped in His own way—that is the essence of the second commandment. The first is, “You shall have no other God,” and the second virtually is, “You shall not make any graven image to represent God, nor bow down to it, nor worship it.” Moses made the rebellious people drink their god as a punishment, but in these times persons live among us who literally eat their God as an act of devotion. The high spiritual mystery in which we are described as spiritually feeding upon our Lord Jesus has my deepest and most solemn reverence, but the superstitious opinion that men can and do literally eat the flesh of Christ under the form of consecrated bread arouses my abhorrence and disgust. The worship of what is called the Blessed Sacrament is as vile an idolatry as the worship by the Egyptians of onions and other pot herbs which grew in their own gardens. There is not a pin to choose between the one and the other and yet this is getting to be common. Bread, which is nothing but bread and when you have said all you can say over it still remains bread, must not be produced in a court of law, or if it is so produced, a great bishop, who should know better, assures his brethren that he has taken care that it is reverently consumed. I wonder what became of the moldy bread? Oh, that ever I, an Englishman, should be forced to believe that another Englishman in this nineteenth century reverences the baker’s paste! Great God in heaven, is this the country of Latimer? Is this the land of gospel light? Or have we clean gone back to Rome and all its idolatries? I want you to be very stiff and straight about this. Do not pay religious honor to anything which can be seen by the eyes. Worship no symbol, however ancient. Worship God only. Abhor every act which approximates to reverence paid to pictures, images, crucifixes, pyxes, wafers, chalices, or altars. Away with the whole idolatrous business—no epithet of scorn will be misapplied if it is turned against these superstitions. I will not now quote the words of ridicule which our fathers poured upon this wickedness, but I beseech you follow them in sternly refusing by word, or look, or sign, to pay the slightest regard for objects of superstitious reverence, lest by mingling with the heathen you incur their guilt. These idolatrous Israelites would have pleaded that they did not worship the golden calf, but they worshipped Jehovah under the figure of a bull—and then they said, “See what a beautiful emblem it is! The bull is the image of strength and God is almighty. How instructive it is! The ox plows our fields and so produces our harvests—what a teaching symbol of the goodness of God! Many of the common people will learn more from this than from a sermon.” Certain artistic people would add, each one in his own manner, “This symbolic worship is so tasteful that it helps me to worship. When I was in the camp and there was no golden image, I could never enter into such a bare worship, but I greatly admire this decorous and hearty service. The extemporary prayers of Moses and his brother were too poor for me. That beautiful bull is aesthetic and awakens thought and emotion and the ceremonies of Apis is to my mind quite a model. Give me a little of Israelite-Egyptian, in which you have the old embellished by the new, and by the help of music and genuflections I can indeed adore.” You know who they are who talk in this fashion nowadays.

Afterwards came the popular sports—for it is written of the people, “They ate and they drank and they rose up to play”—the superstitious are usually fond of vain amusements. The Laudean churchman admired The Book of Sports. The Book of Sports usually gets upon the same shelf as the Book of Ceremonies. “Oh, that is the religion for me,” cries one, “none of your straight-laced talk about worshipping

God in spirit and in truth.” My brethren, I want you to feel that you are on God’s side about this, for every symbol, I repeat it, whether image, picture, bread, or whatsoever you please, must be denounced if it is set up as an object of worship. Whereas the bread and wine are appointed by our Lord Jesus to be used for a memorial of Him, they are so to be used with loving thoughtfulness, but we must not, we dare not, pay the slightest worship to them, for that were to make sin of the blackest dye out of the tenderest of all memories.

The next point is, I would to God we were on the Lord’s side in view of *the sinful amusements which appear to have such charms for many* that even Christian people go quite as far as they should in reference to them. When they had bowed before this golden calf they “rose up to play,” and very pretty play it was. It does not bear explanation. There is about the world a good deal of this “playing.” Beware, I pray you, of every amusement which prevents your redeeming the time or tends to pollute the mind. There are recreations of a healthy, manly, refreshing kind, but those which are of no possible service to you are unprofitable. The same spirit which made the Puritan refuse to reverence the so-called holy days and holy things of superstition led him so to reverence God and His sacred law that he would not join in the debasing amusements of the period, which were, indeed, so gross as a rule that even irreligious people would not in these times endure them. We have somewhat of the same protest to bear and we must not flinch from it. We have better joys than the wanton and the foolish can bring to us. We say of a pastime—if this is pure and clean, if this is health-giving to the body, or restful and invigorating to the mind, we are not led by any old-fashioned whim to denounce it and we do not denounce it. But if about it there is a taint of vice or a temptation that way, or if it is mere folly, we cannot endure it. We venture not where Jesus would not have gone. We would not go where we should be afraid to die or should tremble to hear the trumpet announcing the coming of the Lord. This is stern teaching—are you enough on the Lord’s side to bear it? I pray God to put backbones into modern professors. Every other part of their bodies seems to grow firm except their spinal column, which remains soft and easily distorted. We need to be made resolute and faithful on the Lord’s side. “Oh,” says one, “these are small points.” Yes, but I want you to be like the Spartan who painted on his shield a fly. “Your escutcheon is very small,” said one. “True,” he said, “but I hold it very close to the enemy.” If our points of conscience seem to be small, so much the more need that we hold them in the very faces of those who think little of the things of God. A small point where God is involved is a great matter. Trifling with small things leads to trifling with great things.

Lastly, we need firm decision for God and bold acknowledgment of it in *this day of general tampering with principle*. Numbers of people whom we meet say, “You are right, no doubt, but—.” Now, the Christian way of talking is, “If it is right we know no, ‘but’!” “Oh, yes,” says one, “I agree that it is the straight thing and yet—.” A genuine Christian has no, “and yet.” If words plainly mean such-and-such a thing, he uses them in that sense and not in an unnatural sense. And he never dares to say, “I know that such-and-such things are wrong and they trouble my conscience, but still, you see, I am doing a vast amount of good and we must submit to a little evil in order to gain a great good.” The plain Christian will do no evil that good may come—he loathes the Jesuitical notion. He believes that it is a great evil to attempt to do good by doing evil. To him, truth, right, the teaching of God, the will of Christ are supreme objects. Oh, that you all possessed this spirit and were steadfast in it. In your family circle, in your business—everywhere—be true, be thorough, be upright, be godlike, be Christ-like, and may the divine Spirit help you to this, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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